Perchlorate

Perchlorate is not what makes the rocket ignite; it is what makes the rocket engine burn more safely and reliably. The United States military has been using perchlorate as an oxidizer in rockets, missiles and pyrotechnics since the 1940's. The defense industry and NASA are the largest users of perchlorate in the United States but it can be found in items as common as fireworks and matches.

Colonel David Louis USAF: "Because perchlorate only ignites at very high temperatures, it has proven to be the safest, most effective material for service members to handle in the field as well as for personnel who have manufacturing and transporting responsibilities."

Perchlorate is a salt that easily dissolves in groundwater, moves quickly, and remains in the water for a long period of time. Research into the health effects of Perchlorate has identified emerging concerns in regard to its presence in drinking water and food. The Environmental Protection Agency is currently studying the impacts of perchlorate exposure in an ongoing national effort to establish a regulatory standard for acceptable levels of the substance. The Department of Defense is fully cooperating with this effort and is committed to protecting the health and safety of the community, our servicemen and women and their families. Research and sampling efforts have been occurring to identify perchlorate contamination as a result of military activity. Several technologies are being tested and evaluated to determine the most effective method for cleaning up perchlorate contamination. DoD is also conducting research to identify and evaluate alternatives to perchlorate.

Colonel Tony Francis; Cmdr. USAEC :

“The Army has identified several substitutes for two weapons systems; a ground burst simulator and a training hand grenade. These systems are responsible for 70 percent of the Army's perchlorate use on its training ranges.” These substitutes are expected to be in place by 2006.

For other uses of perchlorate, such as rockets and missiles, smarter business practices will reduce the chances of perchlorate from reaching the groundwater.

Colonel Tony Francis USAEC :

"We're trying to be proactive about the perchlorate issue. We will continue to identify sites that pose potential hazards to drinking and ground water supplies, research alternatives, and test cleanup technologies.”

The military services will continue to act as responsible environmental stewards and good neighbors while maintaining the capability of our munitions.

From Washington, DC… I’m Jesse McGill